

THE AMERICAN LEGION

A LEGIONNAIRE'S GUIDE TO THE WEB

ISSUE 4: SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and the Blogosphere

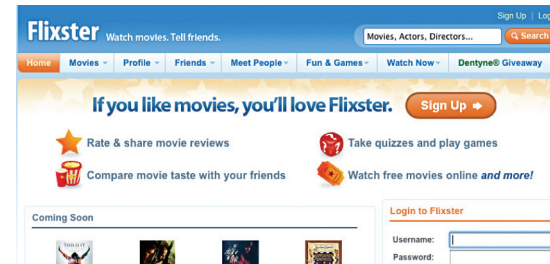


What is social media?

Think of regular media as a one-way street where you can read a newspaper or watch a report on television. This form of media gives you limited ability to interact or share your own thoughts.

Social media, on the other hand, is a two-way street. It gives you the ability to communicate, too. Social media is a way to interact with other users by sharing opinions and content such as photos.

This interaction can be as simple as commenting on an article or as complex as **Flixster** recommending movies to you based on the ratings of other people with similar interests.



Social media characteristics

Participation encourages contributions from everyone, blurring the line between media and audience.

Openness encourages voting, comments and the sharing of information.

Conversation allows you to be part of a two-way exchange of ideas and opinions.

Community joins you with other people who share common interests, such as a love of photography, a political issue or a favorite TV show.

Connectedness is what most kinds of social media thrive on, making use of links to other sites, resources and people.

LEARNING THE LINGO

Users have developed their own language similar to the short-hand you may find in a mobile text. Here are some of the most commonly used abbreviations:

LOL: Laugh out loud. Reaction to a humorous post.

ROTFL: Rolling On The Floor Laughing. Goes beyond just laughing.

OH: Overheard. You might start a post with "OH at the restaurant ..."

SMH: Shake my head. Used to express disbelief.

IDK: I don't know.

ILY: I love you.

BFF: Best Friends Forever.



DIGITAL FACES

Emoticons are textual portrayals of a user's mood or facial expression in the form of icons. Here are some of the more common:

:) Happy
 : D Laughing
 ;) Winking
 :(Crying
 : (Frown
 : | Angry
 : P Tongue sticking out



Basic social media forms

Social networks such as **Facebook** allow you to build personal web pages and then connect with family and friends. You can share opinions, links, photos, videos, news and much more.

Blogs are perhaps the best known form of social media. They are online diaries in which the entries are published with the most recent first. Bloggers rely on text but also increasingly embed photos, videos, links to other sites and other content to support their viewpoints.

Microblogging is social networking combined with bite-sized blogging. It's where small amounts of content or updates are distributed online and through the mobile phone network. **Twitter** is the most common microblogging site.

Content communities organize and share particular kinds of content. The most popular tend to form around photos and videos such as **Pinterest**, **YouTube** and **Flickr**.

Wikis are websites that allow you to add content to or edit the information on them, acting as a communal document or database. The best-known wiki is **Wikipedia**, the online encyclopedia.

Podcasts are audio and video files that are available by subscription, through services like Apple iTunes.

Forums are areas for online discussion, often around specific topics and interests. They came about long before the term "social media" and are an element of online communities.

Facebook



Facebook is the site that turned "Friend" into a verb – as in, "I wasn't going to, but she asked, so I Friend-ed her anyway." Your Facebook Friends

are all the people who receive the updates you post and are allowed to look at the information – birthday, age, real middle name, relationship status ("it's complicated"), likes, dislikes – you choose to list on your Facebook page. It's reciprocal, of course – you can see their pages, too, and their updates show up in your News Feed.



In addition to updates, Facebook users can post photos and videos, keep calendars, publicize events and try out other Facebook applications. Interest groups and organizations, including The American Legion, have affinity pages to publicize programs and host discussions. Businesses even use Facebook pages to promote their products.

Facebook has extensive privacy controls, so no one can see your stuff without your permission. But be sure to pay attention when you set up your account.

Visit: <http://www.legion.org/facebook> for a listing of the Legion's Facebook communities to join.

OTHER NETWORKS

MySpace has built its niche and popularity around its music services.

Bebo is more popular among school-age children. It has the most members mainly because it is grouped around schools and colleges.

LinkedIn is a business social-networking site. You can post your résumé, look for jobs or contact professionals within your industry.

Google+ offers direct competition with Facebook, integrating the portfolio of Google Apps, including Gmail, Calendar and Docs.



Blogs

A blog is simply an online journal. Entries are published with the most recent first.

Blogs tend to be written in a personal and conversational style. They may have one or many authors and explore topics as specific as the war in Afghanistan or as wide as Military/Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation.



Each blog entry has a comments section. Most often, comments turn into debates among readers while the blogger serves as the moderator.

Blogs are easy to set up using software, which is usually free and allows the blogger to customize the appearance. The simplest software is **Blogger**, free from Google. Other choices include **WordPress** (free) or **TypePad** (offers more features but comes with a monthly charge).

You can find blogs you are interested in by searching for them using **Technorati** or **Google Blog Search**. If you discover a blog relevant to you, look for its list of recommended blogs to find other similar blogs.



THE BURN PIT

Read the hottest news facing veterans and patriotic Americans as it breaks. You can follow **The American Legion's** rotation of bloggers, leave your comments and read others.



Follow the Burn Pit here:
www.legion.org/burnpit



Twitter



Twitter is the site where messages cannot be longer than 140 characters. For comparison, the preceding sentence is 74. You find out what others are "tweeting" by "following" them, just as they can follow you – but only with permission.

Once you have an account, tweets from others are listed chronologically on your Twitter home page, which also includes the field where you can type in your own 140-character-long thoughts.

Tweets can range from random ("I could really go for a candy bar right now") to reporting breaking news ("Opposition activists say more than half of the over 14,000 people killed since #Syria uprising began were slaughtered in past 4 months.").

FAQs

Who sees my tweets? It's your call. Users can let all tweets be public. Or tweets can be viewed only by those the user allows. To do this, the user selects "Protect My Tweets" under Settings.

Followers? Following? What's that all about?

A user picks a group of people to monitor, or follow. Those are the people your account is following. When other users decide they want to see your tweets, they follow you.

What are those weird web links in tweets?

Shortened URLs, or hyperlinks, such as bit.ly/QKJWfQ work just like regular web page addresses. However, they save space in a tweet. Remember, a tweet can only be 140 characters and many web pages have very long addresses.

Visit www.legion.org/facebook for a listing of the Legion's Facebook communities to join.



GLOSSARY

Hashtag is the '#' symbol used to mark keywords or topics in a tweet. It was created organically by Twitter users as a way to categorize messages. (#socialmedia)

Avatar is a personal image uploaded to your Twitter profile in the Settings tab of your account.

Retweeting is the act of forwarding another user's tweet to all of your followers.

Trending topic is a subject algorithmically determined to be among the most popular on Twitter at the moment.



YouTube



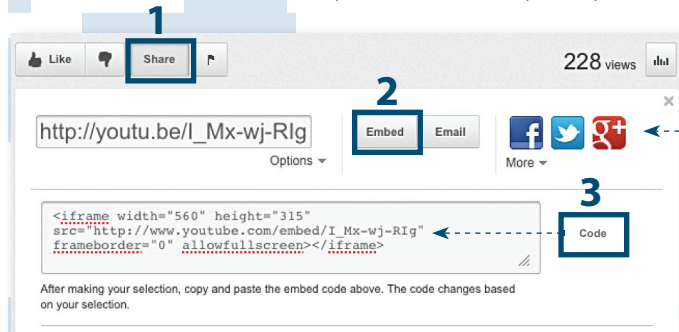
YouTube is the world's largest video sharing service. You can upload videos or create your own channel containing all your "favorite" clips.

You can also browse categories you may be interested in such as autos; science and technology; and travel and events. Once you have viewed enough videos, YouTube will recommend other videos you may like, based on your preferences.

It's easy for you to cut and paste any video hosted by YouTube directly into your website or blog.

POST A VIDEO

Four easy steps will get the video you wish to share posted on your blog or website:



Post a video to a social network using these buttons.

1 Click **Share** located under the video.

2 Click **Embed** button.

3 Copy the **code provided** in the expanded box.

4 Paste the code into your blog or website.

FAQs

Why can't I upload videos longer than 15 minutes? The standard maximum length of a video you can post to YouTube is 15 minutes. You may be able to obtain the ability to upload longer videos by meeting certain requirements.

Can I download videos to my computer? No. Downloading YouTube videos would be a violation of the video owner's copyright.

Visit www.legion.org/legiontv to post any of the Legion's videos to your blog.

Photo sharing

With the onset of mobile technology and the advancements in digital photography, it's no wonder that some entrepreneurs are looking to photo-related social-networking. Two networks that have emerged have created niches for themselves, though there are others out there.



Instagram

Users can download an app (software for a mobile phone, often free or only a couple of dollars) that allows them to take specialized

photos with their phone and distribute them to friends via social-networking sites.

What makes Instagram different than regular photo software for smartphones are the filters that can be applied to photos. Filters can give the image a different look: they can be brighter, or apply a softer look to the photograph.

But what makes Instagram truly distinct is the shape. Instagram photos are square, whereas most digital cameras use a 4:3 ratio, which gives the photos a horizontal look.



Flickr

If you can imagine it, it's on Flickr: Photos of vacation destinations, cute babies, statues, sports events, animals, nature scenes

and everything else. Think of Flickr as the world's scrapbook of images.

Flickr says that it has more than 6 billion images shared and embedded by its massive online community of amateur photographers. Anyone can view images on Flickr, but only registered users can upload photographs.

Visit <http://www.legion.org/flickr> to post American Legion's pictures to your blog.



THE LATEST

Pinterest is quickly gaining popularity. It allows you to create and manage theme-based image collections such as events, interests, hobbies and more.

Pinterest users can upload, save, sort and manage images, known as pins through collections known as pinboards. Pinboards are generally themed so that pins can easily be organized, categorized and discovered by other users.

Users can then save their favorite pins to one of their own boards using the "Pin It" button.



Follow The American Legion

The American Legion Facebook pages

To easily find The American Legion's collection of Facebook pages, go to www.legion.org/Facebook. Once there, you can find the pages you are interested in following and click to access them. The pages include:



- **National Headquarters:** The main Facebook page of The American Legion.
- **Online Update:** Good source for links to Legion-related news about veterans and their primary interests.
- **National Convention:** Excellent resource for news and information about the annual convention.
- **American Legion Riders:** Learn more about the charity work of this dedicated group.
- **The Burn Pit:** Links to the irreverent, fluid and conversational blog.
- **Sons of The American Legion:** News and information about the organization.
- **Baseball:** Keep updated on one of the most successful and tradition-rich amateur athletic leagues.
- **American Legion flags:** Purchase American-made flags.
- **Citizens Flag Alliance:** Keep updated on this group's efforts to persuade Congress to pass a constitutional amendment to protect the U.S. Flag.
- **Heroes to Hometowns:** Learn more about this flagship program that assists those transitioning back to civilian life.
- **Youth Programs Alumni Association:** Former participants can stay connected, informed and active.

The American Legion Twitter accounts

Once on Twitter.com, follow these American Legion-related accounts:

@AmericanLegion

@AmLegionNewsCtr

@Heroes2Hometown





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WWW.LEGION.ORG